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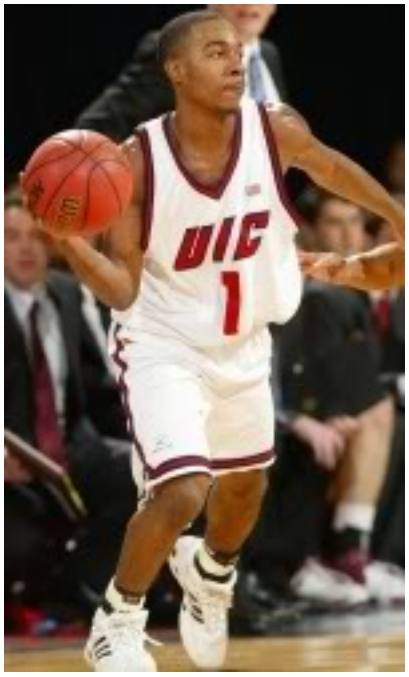

Joe Davis scored a career high 27 points but it wasn't enough for Cleveland State as the Vikings lost their third straight game Thursday night at the University of Illinois-Chicago. No other CSU player scored in double figures and the only thing consistent about the offensive attack was its inconsistency. Although the Vikings shot a respectable 43-percent for the game, the offense went through multiple droughts that resulted in CSU playing catch-up for the entire second half.

UIC came out looking to avenge its 17-point loss at the hands of the Vikings on January 5th and it showed. The Flame's Scott Vandermeer, who was held to six points on two-of-eight shooting in the first meeting, scored the first six points of the game for UIC on a combination of easy lay-ins and short jumpers.

After a Josh Mayo jumper put UIC ahead 8-2, Coach Waters took an emphatic timeout and the Vikings responded. Sparked by active hands on the defensive end and five quick points from Joe Davis, CSU went on a 13-1 run that was capped by a Cedric Jackson dunk to build a 15-9 lead.

CSU continued to play solid basketball for the remainder of the half. Thanks to Davis' hot shooting and missed free-throws by UIC, the Vikings took a 31-27 lead into the locker room.

Although CSU held onto the lead through the first half, the offensive drought actually started with 3:54 left in the first. After Chris Moore's lay-up, the Vikings didn't convert another field goal until the 15:17 mark in the second half. By the time Kevin Francis found the bottom of the net, CSU trailed 35-33. The Vikings would never regain the lead.

A pattern has developed for CSU during the three-game losing streak and it showed up again at UIC. The Vikings play well in the first half and completely fall apart in the second. On this night, CSU kept fighting in spite of its own offensive ineffectiveness, but they could get no closer than two points down with 2:16 remaining.

Davis led CSU with 27 points on 10-16 shooting, including four-of-seven from beyond the arc. Jackson added eight points and 10 rebounds. UIC's Mayo led all scorers with 29 points on a scorching 9-11 shooting. After his hot start, Vandermeer finished with 14 points.

Next for CSU are the Loyola Ramblers. Good thing for the Vikings they won't have to travel outside the city of Chicago, because they need the extra practice time to regroup. After starting the conference slate a perfect 7-0, the Vikings have now lost three-in-a-row to fall to 7-3 and a game behind first place Butler.

Loyola enters the contest 8-13, 4-7 and has won back-to-back games after defeating Youngstown State 69-61 Thursday night. CSU beat the Ramblers 63-55 on January 3rd, ending an 11 game losing streak at the hands of Loyola.

The Ramblers are led by junior guard J.R. Blount who averages 15.9 ppg, fourth in the Horizon League.